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FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4099

INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RHMFIS/39ABG INCIRLIK AB TU PRIORITY

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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RHMFIS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

RHMFIS/EUCOM POLAD VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY

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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J-3/J-5// PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC//USDP:PDUSDP/ISA:EUR/ISA:NESA/DSCA// PRIORITY

RUEHAK/USDAO ANKARA TU PRIORITY

RUEUITH/TLO ANKARA TU PRIORITY

RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU PRIORITY

RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEPGAB/MNF-I C2X BAGHDAD IZ PRIORITY

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 002604

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DEPT. FOR EUR/SE AND NEA/I

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#) [US](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY ERUPTS OVER PKK ATTACKS; EIGHT SOLDIERS
CONFIRMED MISSING

REF: ANKARA 2601

Classified By: DCM Nancy McEldowney for reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

11. (S/NF) SUMMARY: GOT leadership met late October 21 in a special counter terrorism "summit" to determine how to respond to the latest terrorist attacks. The public statement released by the Office of the Presidency reaffirmed the government's resolve in responding to terrorism and called for national unity. Media reaction has featured headlines insisting that Turkey's patience is at an end. Reaction to the statements by Iraqi Kurdish leaders has been uniformly negative, with some pundits equating Iraq President Talabani and Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) President Barzani with jailed PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan. All media is also giving broad coverage to reports that Secretary Rice asked PM Erdogan for several days to convince Iraqi authorities to take steps against the PKK presence in northern Iraq as well as to President Bush's comment that PKK violence must end. Intensive counter-terror operations continue on October 22 in Hakkari Province along the Iraq border with reports that Turkish special forces based in Silopi near the Habur Gate border crossing into Iraq are displaying signs of being at a higher state of readiness. TGS confirmed at 1415 local time that eight Turkish troops remain missing since the initial attack; at least one media outlet has published the names of seven of those reported missing. Government sources, however, have not confirmed that the soldiers were abducted. END SUMMARY

Government Reaction

12. (SBU) President Gul convened a meeting late October 21 in Ankara of senior Turkish government and military officials, including PM Erdogan, Turkish General Staff Chief of Defense Gen. Buyukanit, ministers of Justice and Interior, and the Chief of National Intelligence, among others, to discuss the government's response to PKK attacks carried out near Turkey's border with Iraq that killed at least 12 and injured another 33. A statement released by the office of the

Presidency after the meeting reaffirmed the GOT's resolve to fight against terrorism, but called for Turkey's reaction to be based on common sense. It encouraged the media to continue to act responsibly. The statement called for national unity and solidarity and noted that all Turkish state institutions would be cooperating to fight against the terrorist threat. Turkey, while respecting the territorial integrity of Iraq, will not allow the aiding and abetting of terror, and will not refrain from paying whatever price is necessary for protecting its right, laws, indivisible integrity, and its citizens.

13. (SBU) Prime Minister Erdogan convened a cabinet meeting late on the morning of October 22 to discuss the attacks and to determine the government's plan of action. As of 1430 local time, that meeting was still ongoing.

Media Reaction

14. (SBU) Initial media reaction to the attacks has been sharply sensational. A look at headlines of major Turkish dailies is illustrative. "Today's Zaman" headlines, "Heinous Attack Stretches Turkey's Patience to Limits." Leftist-liberal "Radikal" notes, "All of Turkey Protests," showing pictures of spontaneous street protests that erupted in most major cities in Turkey Sunday afternoon and evening. Mainstream "Sabah" headlines, "Two Insolent Leaders" in reference to the immediate reactions to the attacks by Iraq President Talabani and Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) President Massoud Barzani.

ANKARA 00002604 002 OF 002

15. (SBU) Reaction, both official and by the media, to the statements by Talabani and Barzani has been uniformly negative and condemnatory. While both Iraqi Kurdish leaders said they regretted the terrorist attacks and Talabani was quoted as calling on the PKK to put down its arms or leave Iraq, the leaders' refusal to label the PKK a terrorist organization and Talabani's statement that no Kurd ("not even a Kurdish cat") will be surrendered to Turkey have been roundly castigated.

16. (SBU) All major newspapers and television news outlets have reported on Secretary Rice's telephone conversation with PM Erdogan, with her reported request that Turkey give the U.S. a few days to convince the Iraqi government of the need for action against the PKK before carrying out a cross border operation (CBO) itself given primary coverage. President Bush's comment that "the PKK attacks must stop" is also receiving a great deal of attention in Turkish media.

Ongoing Operations

17. (S/NF) Counter terrorist operations continue along the border region of Hakkari Province as Turkish military forces pursue those who carried out the attack. The most recent update provided by the TGS claims that 34 of the 200-250 attackers have been killed. Turkish special forces based further west along the border in Silopi near the Habur Gate border crossing are reportedly on a higher state of readiness October 22. TGS still has not confirmed, publicly or privately, that Turkish troops were taken hostage by the PKK in the October 21 attack. They did confirm, however, that eight Turkish troops have been missing since the initial attack and attempts to communicate with them have been unsuccessful. At least one media outlet has listed the names of seven of the missing soldiers.

Mission Security

18. (SBU) Anti-terror protests are taking place in cities throughout Turkey. There have been a number of impromptu

protests outside the embassy over the course of the last 36 hours involving small groups or individuals shouting anti-American epithets. An organized demonstration was supposed to take place October 22 at the Istanbul Consulate and others are anticipated throughout the week.

19. (C) COMMENT: The Government's initial reaction has been measured compared to the emotional response of the media and public. At the same time, GOT officials have made clear they are prepared to move forward with military action when necessary. The first responses by Iraqi Kurdish leaders to the attacks, as reported here, did not contribute to calming the atmosphere, but rather exacerbated things considerably.

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